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Diana T Fritz 05/24/2007 04:31:04 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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CONFIDENTIAL

SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

April 15, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 1813 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM
Captions: None
Subject: MFA MINSTATE HAMDAN BIN ZAYID ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE
UAE: SOONER BETTER THAN LATER
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 01813

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL:STWILLIAMS
CLEARED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT; CGD:RGOLSON

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OO RUEHC RUEHZM RHEHNSC RUEAIIA RHEFDIA RUEKJCS
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DE RUEHAD #1813 1051048
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 151048Z APR 03
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9433
INFO RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5/UNMA// IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//OSD/NESA// IMMEDIATE
RUCJACC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3/CCJ4/CCJ5// IMMEDIATE
RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 001813

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA and DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/13
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: MFA MINSTATE HAMDAN BIN ZAYID ON
DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE UAE: SOONER
BETTER THAN LATER

REF: DUBAI 1318

1. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba
for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

2. (C) During a 4/13 meeting, the Ambassador asked
for MFA Minstate Hamdan bin Zayid's opinion on

Dubai's recent decision to establish elected district councils. Hamdan briefed that de facto Dubai Ruler Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (MbR) had not consulted with the Abu Dhabi leadership and hinted the decision had come as a complete surprise. Furthermore, Hamdan sniffed, Abu Dhabi had not had time to follow-up the matter with Dubai, as the leadership was far too busy following events in Iraq. (Note: President Zayid recently had a meeting with MBR, and the Dubai rumor mill has it that Zayid asked MbR for an explanation. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Hamdan told the Ambassador that he was among those favoring an early move to democratization in the UAE, consonant with the country's traditional cultural, religious and social norms. As he put it, "better we do it our way rather than waiting for the Americans to pressure us later into doing it their way." It would be a nice legacy for Shaykh Zayid, in Hamdan's view, and with Zayid's imprimatur, the move to democratization would be more widely accepted. (Note: The implication being that Zayid's successor, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khalifa, may encounter greater resistance from conservatives. End Note.) Lending some urgency to the matter is the fact that all of the other states in the region, even the Saudis, are opening up politically, Hamdan noted.

¶4. (C) The situation in the UAE, Hamdan explained, is different than in other Gulf states and therefore the leadership needs to proceed somewhat cautiously. For instance, the population distribution (Emiratis comprise only 20 percent of the overall population) and the fact that fifty percent of Emirati nationals are naturalized citizens must be taken into consideration. The UAE wants to avoid the pitfalls of others in the region, namely Kuwait, where until recently, naturalized citizens could not vote. In addition, Hamdan believes the UAE should start small, i.e. elected local bodies, rather than immediately moving to an elected federal parliament. In his opinion, the Oman model is worthy of emulation.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Reading between the lines, Dubai's announcement came as a bombshell to Abu Dhabi. Once again, the upstart Al-Maktoum have scooped the more staid, conservative Al-Nahyan, in a move which sends a dual message. One is that Dubai, Inc. is exercising its right to run its own affairs, without the prior approval of Abu Dhabi. We note that Sharjah did the same when it decided to appoint women to its consultative council two years ago. The second message is intended for a much wider local, regional and international audience and is part of Dubai's effort to project an image of a progressive, forward leaning city-state led by a dynamic family. Dubai's leadership is intensely aware that its continued prosperity depends on attracting foreign investment, and it realizes that some measure of political openness is viewed as desirable by major investors, especially when other regional competitors (Bahrain and Qatar) are implementing more progressive political systems. We also note that it is not unusual for the press savvy Dubayyans to make a dramatic announcement -- utterly devoid of substance -- the details of which will be filled in at a later date. Stay tuned. END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Amconsul Dubai.

WAHBA